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Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties

Sixth meeting
Geneva, 9 November 2018
Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, including financial matters

Report on implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report was prepared by the secretariat pursuant to decisions II/3 and III/2 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1, decision II/3, para. 2, and ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/2, para. 2). It provides an overview of implementation of the Protocol's work programmes for 2015–2017 (from 1 June to 31 December 2017) and for 2018–2021 (from 1 January to 17 July 2018).

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I. Introduction

1. The present document provides an overview of implementation of the work programmes of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1, decision II/3, and ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/2) as at 17 July 2018, focusing on operational and organizational aspects. It complements the information provided in the report on the implementation of the work programme for 2015–2017 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/8), submitted to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its third session (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017). Owing to the cross-cutting nature of the Protocol, implementation of the various areas of the work programme also promoted achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, Goals 3, 9, 12 and 16. For an overview of the relevant contributions and expenditures, see documents ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/9, ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/9/Corr.1 and ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/4. The present report also includes information on the linkages between the activities carried out under the work programme and the focal areas and objectives set out in the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1, decision II/2). It should be noted that while the report focuses on activities carried out by the secretariat and the Protocol's bodies, the strategic plan also includes objectives to be pursued by the Parties, civil society organizations and other partners.

2. In implementing the work programme, the secretariat made every effort to avoid duplication of work and inefficient use of resources by:

(a) Pursuing synergies with the activities of other partner organizations;

(b) Conducting specific thematic surveys prior to activities in order to better meet the needs of Parties and stakeholders;

(c) Continuously increasing the use and development of electronic tools for Protocol activities (e.g., email consultations, phone conferences, online databases, the online reporting tool for national implementation reports, the clearinghouse mechanism and the PRTR.net global portal).

II. Overview of implementation of the work programme

A. Compliance mechanism

3. During the reporting period (1 June 2017 to 17 July 2018), the Protocol's Compliance Committee held its sixth meeting (Budva, 14–15 September 2017).[1] The main focus of the Committee's work has been on assisting Parties in their efforts to implement the Protocol by preparing a number of documents based on lessons learned from the first reporting cycle.

4. In the context of preparation of the 2017 synthesis report on the implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/10), the Committee also discussed the question of whether, in light of the declaration of competence of the European Union made under article 26, paragraph 4, of the Protocol, European Union member States that are Parties are

[1] Meeting documents and other information on the work of the Compliance Committee are available at http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr-cc.html

required to introduce their own national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) to supplement action taken at the European Union level. The Committee identified a number of issues that would require further analysis and agreed to discuss the matter further.

5. At its third session, the Meeting of the Parties requested the Bureau to consider the added value and resource implications of a possible evaluation of the success of the Protocol and development of the indicators referred to in the annex to the report of the Compliance Committee on its fifth meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2017/2) and, if appropriate, to present a detailed proposal for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para. 42).

6. To date, the Committee has received no submissions from Parties concerning their own compliance or that of other Parties, no formal referrals by the secretariat and no formal communications from the public regarding compliance with the Protocol.

7. The work under the Protocol's compliance mechanism is relevant for the achievement of objectives I.1, I.3–I.6 under focal area I, and for all the objectives of focal area III, of the strategic plan for 2015–2020.

B. Technical assistance

8. Technical assistance activities may involve specific projects in countries needing assistance, including training workshops, guidance materials and expert assistance. Such assistance is relevant primarily for the achievement of focal areas I and II of the strategic plan.

1. Workshops and country-specific projects

9. The secretariat promoted the Protocol on PRTRs at the second meeting of the Steering Committee for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Global Project on the Implementation of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers as a tool for Persistent Organic Pollutants reporting, dissemination and awareness raising, held in Lima, Peru, from 5 to 8 March 2018, and at the UNITAR workshop on Strengthening Capacities for Developing a National Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) in Support of [Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)] Implementation in Mongolia, held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, from 26 to 27 June 2018. Bilateral consultations with relevant Mongolian authorities and experts were held in the margins of the latter workshop on 25 June 2018.

2. Technical assistance through electronic tools

10. The secretariat continued to manage the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy[2] and the PRTR.net global portal.[3] PRTR.net is used to facilitate the collection, dissemination and exchange of information related to PRTRs. The Protocol secretariat maintained and updated PRTR.net in cooperation with UNITAR and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and continued to work closely with UNITAR in order to ensure the effective use of PRTR.net and PRTR:Learn[4] by national focal points and stakeholders.

11. The secretariat also continued to administer a database on capacity-building activities,[5] which provides information on past, future and ongoing PRTR capacity-building

[2] http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/
[3] http://www.prtr.net/
[4] http://prtr.unitar.org/
[5] http://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/RLsearch.asp

activities. This includes a feature that enables national focal points and stakeholders to log in and upload data to the database.

12. The Protocol section of the ECE website was updated regularly during the intersessional period. In addition, section D below includes information regarding the online reporting tool.

3. Thematic surveys

13. During the reporting period, the secretariat carried out a survey of national focal points on progress in implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020. The outcomes of the survey were used in preparing the documents on, respectively, progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/5) and development of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/6).

C. Information exchange on a technical level

14. The objective of information exchange on a technical level is to monitor and facilitate implementation of the Protocol. This information is exchanged at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol, at ad hoc meetings and through the use of electronic tools. Information exchange on a technical level is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan and, specifically, for the achievement of objectives I.1, I.2, II.1, II.3 and III.1.

15. In addition, sections B above and E below describe trainings, surveys, subregional workshops, electronic tools and other activities that enable the exchange of information on a technical level. Sections D and F below include information on the reporting mechanism and the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties.

D. Reporting mechanism

16. The objective of the reporting mechanism is to monitor and facilitate implementation of the Protocol, the review of compliance and the exchange of experience. This is achieved through meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol; exchanges on a technical level of information on the application of electronic information tools; and use of the online national implementation reports database in the Aarhus Clearinghouse, the PRTR:Learn website, the PRTR capacity-building activities matrix and e-reporting. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of focal area I of the strategic plan.

17. Following the failure of Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Ukraine to submit their national implementation reports for the 2017 reporting cycle before the third session of the Meeting of the Parties (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017), these Parties were called upon to report by 1 October 2017. As at 17 July 2018, Slovenia had still not submitted its report for the 2014 reporting cycle and Malta and Slovenia had not submitted their reports for the 2017 reporting cycle.

E. Awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes

18. The objective of awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes is: (a) to expand knowledge of the Protocol throughout the ECE region and beyond; (b) to increase the number of Parties; and (c) to further the application of the Protocol in the context of other multilateral environmental agreements and related processes (e.g., the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals

Management under the International Conference on Chemicals Management). The activity is pursued by participating in key regional and international events and processes; supporting workshops organized by others; preparing leaflets, publications, news bulletins and other materials on the Protocol; updating the website; and writing and reviewing articles on the Protocol. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan, and specifically for the achievement of objectives I.1, II.2–4 and III.1.

19. Cooperation between the secretariat and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council was further enhanced during the reporting period. The secretariat provided input on the added value of the Convention and its Protocol to a study by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Promotion, protection and implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of the existing human rights law: best practices, experiences, challenges and ways to overcome them (A/HRC/30/26). At the invitation of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, input to the report to be submitted to the Council at its thirty-eighth session, requested in paragraph 18 of Council resolution 32/31 on civil society space, was also provided. Lastly, the secretariat provided input into the expert consultations on children's rights (Geneva, 22–23 June 2017) and on human rights and the environment (Geneva, 17 October 2017) with a view to the preparation of two reports of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/37/58 and A/HRC/37/59).

20. The secretariat promoted the Convention and its Protocol at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Geneva, Switzerland 24–29 September 2017), highlighting the potential for synergies in implementing the two instruments. A third Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, to be held in Geneva on 7–8 November 2018 under the auspices of ECE and OECD and in cooperation with UNITAR and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), will be co-chaired by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and the Chair of the OECD Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. The Round Table is expected to foster exchanges between governments and a variety of stakeholders on PRTR-related issues. The presentations and discussions during the event will focus on good practices, common challenges and new opportunities related to the further development of PRTRs.

21. The secretariat also participated, or arranged for the participation of representatives of Convention and Protocol bodies, in a number of workshops and other events in various countries. At the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, it promoted the Protocol at side events on the pollutant release and transfer register module in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) toolbox for decision-making in chemicals management (organized by OECD and UNITAR) and on advancing pollutant release and transfer registers in the Western Balkans and in the Republic of Moldova (organized by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe).

22. In order to build synergies and enhance coordination with partners, the secretariat serviced the tenth meeting of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Mechanisms (PRTR) Coordinating Group (New York, 29 June 2017),[6] held immediately following the first meeting of the OECD Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. The Coordinating Group maintained ongoing close cooperation with the Global Environment Facility, OECD, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNEP and UNITAR on PRTR-related issues.

[6] http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html

23. The secretariat promoted the Protocol through various reports and articles prepared under the auspices of ECE and partner organizations, including the *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6)* with its *Assessment for the pan-European Region*; encouraged synergies within the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Information and Knowledge Management Initiative, coordinated by UNEP; and took part in related meetings. It also contributed information on the electronic tools used for Convention and Protocol activities to the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (A/73/66-E/2018/10).

24. Lastly, the secretariat continued an enhanced outreach exercise that involved distributing materials about the Convention and the Protocol to national focal points, Aarhus Centres, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in the ECE region.

F. Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities

25. Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities under the Protocol are carried out at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and, where necessary, of the Bureau and through consultations among Bureau members using email. This work programme activity is relevant to all three focal areas of the strategic plan.

26. In cooperation with the host country, Montenegro, the secretariat organized the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and their Joint High-level Segment, held in Budva, Montenegro on 11–15 September 2017, as well as 18 side events in the margins of the sessions.[7]

27. It also serviced the twelfth meeting of the Bureau (Budva, 13 September 2017) and the thirteenth meeting of the Bureau (Gothenburg, 23–24 May 2018)[8] and coordinated a number of email consultations among Bureau members.

28. Representatives of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements continued to liaise at informal meetings in order to exchange information on priorities under the agreements and to identify and discuss potential areas for cooperation and synergy in the light of recent and future developments in the area of the environment. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and the secretariat participated in the ninth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Committee of Environmental Policy (Geneva, 13 November 2017).[9]

29. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties also presented activities under the Protocol and their role in achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14–17 November 2017).

30. As at 17 July 2018, there are 36 Parties to the Protocol, Montenegro having ratified it on 11 October 2017.

G. Technical assessment of provisions of the Protocol

31. Technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol involves the drafting of recommendations on technical issues for the Meeting of the Parties based on the assessment reports. The method of work for this activity includes meetings of the Working Group of

[7] http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhusmop6&prtrmopp3/main.html

[8] http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr-bureau.html

[9] http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/joint-work-and-informal-networks.html

the Parties to the Protocol, electronic consultation, and drafting of assessment reports on experience gained in the development of national PRTRs under article 6, paragraph 2, of the Protocol. This work programme activity is relevant for the achievement of all three focal areas of the strategic plan, and specifically objectives I.1–6, II.1 and III.1–4.

32. At its first meeting (Geneva, 28–29 November 2011), the Working Group of the Parties agreed that no amendments to the provisions of the Protocol were needed at that time and that experience needed to be gathered before such a review could take place. The 2014 and 2017 synthesis reports on the implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/5 and ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/10), presented to the Meeting of the Parties at its second and third sessions, respectively, and the national implementation reports[10] on which the syntheses were based provide insight into some of the issues related to technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol.

33. At its thirteenth meeting, the Bureau considered the outcome of the review of progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020, and particularly the major opportunities and challenges encountered during the review,[11] as well as the lessons learned from the development of national PRTRs, implementation of the Protocol and relevant international processes. In light of the foregoing, the Bureau decided to put forward a proposal related to development of the Protocol for consideration by the Working Group of the Parties at its sixth meeting.

H. Horizontal support areas

34. The objective of the horizontal support activities carried out during the periods 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 was to provide overall support covering multiple substantive areas of the work programme, including secretarial support and staff training. These activities are relevant to all focal areas of the strategic plan.

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[10] http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/reporting.html

[11] See the note by the Bureau on progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/5)

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Sixth meeting
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, including financial matters

Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to implementation of the Protocol's work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to a decision taken by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters at its third session (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017) (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/3, para. 9). It provides an overview of contributions and expenditures in relation to implementation of the 2015–2017 work programme for the Protocol during the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 and of the 2018–2021 work programme for the Protocol as at 23 July 2018.

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I. General considerations

1. The present report provides an overview of contributions and expenditures in relation to implementation of the 2015–2017 work programme for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1, decision II/4, para. 10) during the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 and of the 2018–2021 work programme for the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRPR/2017/6/Add.1, decision III/3, paragraph 9) as at 23 July 2018.[1] During the reporting period (1 January 2017 to 23 July 2018), the secretariat of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) remained cautious in allocating resources, owing primarily to the fact that since many contributions were not yet available at the beginning of the financial year, there was some uncertainty as to the availability of sufficient funds. The secretariat made various efforts to encourage in-kind contributions in order to reduce the impact on the trust fund, and it will continue to pursue synergies with other United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations agencies and other partners in order to maintain a satisfactory number of activities and to share implementation costs.

2. For the sustainability of the work under the Protocol, it is crucial to ensure staff funding on a long-term basis. The extension of contracts for staff funded under the trust fund depends on the availability and the level of the contributions received. Since the current financial scheme is based on voluntary contributions and provides no guidance regarding their amount, the level of contributions fluctuates, making the funding of extrabudgetary posts unpredictable and far from secure. As in the past, the secretariat was therefore obliged to give priority to securing funds for staff costs, which need to be reserved for at least one year before issuing a staff contract. The secretariat was able to allocate sufficient funds for staff and for activities in the reporting period only owing to savings accumulated at the end of each preceding year.

3. The temporary arrangement whereby one administrative staff post was funded from the 13 per cent programme support costs levied on the ECE Environment Division's trust funds was discontinued as from 1 February 2016. This staff member is required in order to provide support for activities under the Convention and its Protocol, including administrative arrangements for meetings of their governing and subsidiary bodies. In order to ensure uninterrupted implementation, the secretariat recruited an administrative staff member funded through extrabudgetary resources.

II. Contributions

4. The "adjusted contribution" column in Tables 1 and 2 below is intended to offer a more realistic picture of the actual resources available for use in a given year. Contributions by Parties and signatories are often intended for use in a year other than the one in which the funds are deposited and/or received. The adjusted contribution figure for a given year is derived from the actual contribution received during that year, minus any part of the contribution that was intended for use in a different year and plus any contributions made in years other than the reference year but intended for use during that year. Owing to the lack of timely funding for a specific year, the secretariat is obliged to use the available funds as needed. The amounts presented in all tables are rounded to whole numbers.

[1] For a substantive overview of implementation of the work programme during the reporting period, see ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/3.

A. Financial contributions and pledges

Table 1
Contributions received under the Convention and the Protocol in or for 2017, as at 23 July 2018
(in United States dollars)

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2017*	*Adjusted contribution for 2017*	*Remarks*
Albania	—	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	—	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
Austria	—	10 929	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	5 022	5 022	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
	11 065	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	5 532	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Azerbaijan	293	293	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Belarus	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Belgium (Federal)	21 762	21 762	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Belgium (Brussels–Capital region)	1 009	1 009	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Belgium (Flemish region)	8 499	8 499	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Belgium (Walloon region)	4 091	4 091	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Bosnia and Herzegovina	—	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
Bulgaria	1 936	1 936	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Croatia	3 000	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	3 000	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Cyprus	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
	500	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2015, received in 2017
	500	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2017
	500	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2014, received in 2017
	500	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2015, received in 2017
	500	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2016, received in 2017
Czechia	—	15 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	—	10 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
	5 000	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	10 000	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Denmark	—	20 325	For the Aarhus Convention, received in 2015 for years 2015–2017 (full amount $60,975), annualized for 2017
	—	10 163	For the Protocol on PRTRs received in 2015 for years 2015–2017 (full amount $30,489), annualized for 2017
	10 675	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Estonia	—	2 370	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2017*	*Adjusted contribution for 2017*	*Remarks*
			PRTRs 2017, received in 2018
European Union	106 724	106 724	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	12 597	12 597	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Finland	10 000	10 000	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
France	—	71 744	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	70 575	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	32 017	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2016, received in 2017
	35 294	35 294	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Georgia	1 000	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Germany	60 000	60 000	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
	27 996	27 996	Additional contribution for the Protocol on PRTRs 2017 to support the participation of experts from countries with economies in transition and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
Greece	1 000	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2014, received in 2017
	1 000	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2015, received in 2017
	1 000	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2017
Hungary	4 977	4 977	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	481	481	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Iceland	1 480	1 480	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Ireland	—	5 464	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	5 924	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	—	3 279	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
	3 555	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Italy	106 157	106 157	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	—	29 757	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention work programme 2015–2017 to promote the Convention among non-ECE countries, received in 2015 for years 2015–2017 (full amount $89,272); annualized for 2017
	7 109	7 109	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention work programme 2017–2018, received in 2017
Kazakhstan	1 000	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Kyrgyzstan	858	858	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Latvia	2 000	2 000	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
	1 185	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Lithuania	1 067	1 067	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2017*	*Adjusted contribution for 2017*	*Remarks*
	2 323	—	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
	2 323	—	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2019, received in 2017
	2 323	—	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2020, received in 2017
Luxembourg	1 086	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2017
	1 086	1 086	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	543	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2016, received in 2017
	543	543	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Malta	1 000	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Montenegro	—	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	500	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Netherlands	—	47 771	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	21 345	21 345	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Norway	20 000	20 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	20 000	20 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
	57 400	—	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs for 2018 to support the participation of experts from countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and NGOs, and associated administrative staff costs to support the organization of meetings and the travel arrangements for these experts, received in 2017
Poland	—	5 308	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	—	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
Portugal	503	503	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Republic of Moldova	1 000	1 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Romania	500	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2015, received in 2017
	500	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2017
	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Serbia	—	1 600	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2018
Slovakia	—	807	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2016
	—	531	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
Slovenia	4 132	4 132	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	—	531	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2016
	4 132	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2012, received in 2017
	4 132	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2013, received in 2017
Spain	5 896	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2017
	5 896	5 896	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Sweden	35 000	35 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	18 000	18 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2017*	*Adjusted contribution for 2017*	*Remarks*
Switzerland	40 161	40 161	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, of which 20,000 Swiss francs to support the building of capacity of experts from countries with economies in transition
	72 993	72 993	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, of which 50,000 Swiss francs to support the building of capacity of experts from countries with economies in transition
Tajikistan	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	46 512	—	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2016, received in 2017
	46 512	46 512	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Total	**1 009 220**	**966 099**	
of which allocated exclusively for the Protocol on PRTRs	286 276	251 273	

Note: No financial contributions, in-kind contributions or pledges have been received from the following Parties to the Convention for 2017: Armenia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkmenistan. No financial contributions, in-kind contributions or pledges have been received from the following Parties to the Protocol for 2017: Belgium, Israel, Malta, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

Table 2

Contributions received under the Convention and the Protocol in or for 2018, as at 23 July 2018

(in United States dollars)

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2018*	*Adjusted contribution for 2018*	*Remarks*
Albania	3 000	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	3 000	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Austria	—	11 065	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	—	5 532	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Belgium (Federal)	24 758	24 758	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Belgium (Brussels-Capital region)	1 167	1 167	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Bulgaria	1 592	1 592	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Croatia	3 000	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	3 000	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Cyprus	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Czechia	—	5 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	—	10 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Denmark	21 400	21 400	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	—	10 675	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Estonia	2 370	—	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2017, received in 2018

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2018*	*Adjusted contribution for 2018*	*Remarks*
European Union	122 699	122 699	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	12 170	12 170	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Finland	4 985	4 985	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
France	—	70 575	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	76 651	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2019, received in 2018
	36 810	36 810	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Georgia	1 000	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Germany	60 000	60 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Hungary	4 977	4 977	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	481	481	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Ireland	—	5 924	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, received in 2017
	—	3 555	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Italy	124 224	124 224	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	—	7 109	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention work programme 2017–2018, received in 2017
	6 211	6 211	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention work programme 2017–2018, received in 2018
Kazakhstan	1 000	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Latvia	2 000	2 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	1 195	—	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2016, received in 2018
	—	1 185	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Lithuania	—	2 323	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Luxembourg	1 447	1 447	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	868	868	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Montenegro	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	—	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, received in 2017
Netherlands	55 556	55 556	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Norway	39 970	39 970	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
	—	57 400	Additional contribution for the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs for 2018 to support the participation of experts from countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and NGOs, and associated administrative staff costs to support the organization of meetings and the travel arrangements for these experts, received in 2017
Poland	5 974	5 974	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	3 000	3 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Portugal	522	522	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	522	522	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Romania	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2018

Donor country	*Actual contribution in 2018*	*Adjusted contribution for 2018*	*Remarks*
	500	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Serbia	1 600	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2016, received in 2018
	1 600	—	For the Aarhus Convention 2017, received in 2018
	1 600	1 600	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Slovakia	908	908	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	597	597	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Sweden	34 970	34 970	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
	17 970	17 970	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Switzerland	40 404	40 404	For the Aarhus Convention 2018, of which 20,000 Swiss francs to support the building of capacity of experts from countries with economies in transition
	73 298	73 298	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018, of which 50,000 Swiss francs to support the building of capacity of experts from countries with economies in transition
Tajikistan	500	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	45 512	45 512	For the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Total	**848 006**	**948 325**	
of which allocated exclusively for Protocol on PRTRs	154 911	185 163	

Table 3
Pledges for 2015–2021 as at 23 July 2018
(in original currency)

Donor country	*Original currency*	*Amount*	*Remarks*
Austria	€	10 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2019
	€	10 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2020
	$	5 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2019
	$	5 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2020
	$	5 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2021
Belgium (Flemish region)	$	8 499	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
Belgium (Walloon region)	€	3 465	For the Aarhus Convention 2018
European Union	$	12 170	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2019
	$	12 170	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2020
	$	12 170	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2021
Germany	$	60 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2019
	$	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
	€	25 000	Additional contribution to the Protocol on PRTRs in 2018 to support the participation of experts from countries with economies in transition and NGOs
Iceland	$	1 500	For the Aarhus Convention 2018

Donor country	*Original currency*	*Amount*	*Remarks*
Israel	$	5 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2015
Netherlands	€	20 000	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2018
Republic of Moldova	$	1 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
Romania	$	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2019
	$	500	For the Aarhus Convention 2020
Serbia	$	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2015
	$	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2016
	$	500	For the Protocol on PRTRs 2017
Sweden	SKr	17 650	Additional contribution for the Protocol on PRTRs 2018 to support secretariat travel to the meeting of the Protocol's Bureau
Ukraine	$	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2017
	$	3 000	For the Aarhus Convention 2018

B. In-kind contributions

5. The following in-kind contributions were received during the reporting period:[2]

(a) From the Government of Montenegro, support for the organization and hosting of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the Joint High-level Segment and the associated preparatory meetings (Budva, Montenegro, 10–15 September 2017);

(b) From the Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Montenegro, support for the organization of the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties and the associated preparatory meetings;

(c) From the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, support for the organization of the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, the associated preparatory meetings and several side events and for travel by non-governmental and governmental delegates, representatives of the judiciary and a number of participants from Aarhus Centres to attend sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, side events and meetings of subsidiary bodies under the Convention and the Protocol;

(d) From the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, support for the organization of several side events and for travel of representatives of the judiciary and other legal professionals to attend sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, side events and meetings of subsidiary bodies under the Convention and the Protocol;

(e) From the Governments of France, Italy and Sweden, secretariat to the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and NGOs, support for the organization of side events in the margins of sessions of the Meetings of the Parties;

[2] In-kind contributions for activities under the Aarhus Convention only are mentioned in the report on the contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programme for 2015–2017 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/4), submitted to the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–13 September 2017).

(f) From the Government of Germany, support for the establishment and advancement of PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe and the Republic of Moldova;

(g) From the Government of the Sweden, support for the hosting of the thirteenth meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol (Gothenburg, Sweden, 23–24 May 2018);

(h) From the Government of Spain, support for promotion of the Protocol on PRTRs in Latin American and Caribbean countries and Turkey in 2017 and 2018.

III. Estimated and projected expenditures

6. The costs shown in tables 4 and 5 below are estimated and projected. The costs are limited to those intended to be covered by voluntary contributions made under the Convention's and Protocol's schemes of financial arrangements through the trust fund. They do not include costs that are expected to be covered under the United Nations regular budget. Figures are rounded up and may change in accordance with United Nations administrative regulations. The expenditures reported are related to implementation of the Protocol's 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 work programmes. Expenses related to the Aarhus Convention are reported to the Convention's bodies.

Table 4
Estimated expenditures for January-December 2017 as at 23 July 2018
(in United States dollars)

Item	*Expenditures*	*Description*
1 P-3 staff post: Protocol on PRTRs; electronic information tools, Clearinghouse; PRTR.net	115 815	95 per cent of P-3 staff costs for January-December 2017[a]
Secretarial support	29 968	30 per cent of G4 staff costs for January-December 2017[b]
Subcontracts	3 200	Translations of the synthesis report on implementation of the Protocol with an overview of progress in implementing the strategic plan
Travel of experts and participants	101 647	Compliance Committee, Meeting of the Parties, Joint High-level Segment and Bureau meetings
Travel of staff	3 128	Travel of staff to service the tenth meeting of the International Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR) Coordinating Group
Subtotal	**253 758**	
13% programme support	32 989	
Total	**286 747**	

[a] The remaining 5 per cent of P-3 staff costs relate to the management of electronic tools and are reported to the bodies of the Aarhus Convention.
[b] The remaining 70 per cent of G-4 staff costs are reported to the bodies of the Aarhus Convention.

Table 5
January-December 2018 (projected) expenditures
(in United States dollars)

Activity	*Item*	*Core expenditures*	*Other expenditures*

A.	Compliance mechanism	Travel of experts and participants	—	—
		Expert missions	5 000	—
		Subcontracts	5 000	—
B.	Technical assistance	Travel of experts and participants, organizational costs (e.g., capacity-building workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia)	—	10 000
		Expert missions	—	5 000
		Subcontracts	—	5 000
C.	Information exchange on a technical level	Ad hoc expert meetings (Travel of experts and eligible participants)	—	10 000
		Subcontracts (e.g. maintenance and improvement of PRTR.net and the PRTR online tool on national implementation reports)	10 000	—
D.	Reporting mechanism		—[a]	—
E.	Awareness-raising and promotion of the Protocol and its interlinkages with other treaties and processes	Travel of experts and the secretariat	10 000	—
		Subcontracts	—	5 000
F.	Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities	Travel of experts, participants and the secretariat (e.g., Working Group of the Parties, Global Round Table, Bureau)	40 000	—
G.	Technical assessment of the provisions of the Protocol		5 000	—
H.	Horizontal support areas	Staff training	500	—
	Subtotal (activities)		**75 500**	**35 000**
Staff requirements		One P-3 staff member (Protocol on PRTRs, electronic information tools, Clearinghouse, PRTR.net)	177 000	—
		Secretarial support (G staff)	34 500[b]	—
	Subtotal (staff requirements)		**211 500**	—
Programme support costs (13%)			37 310	4 550
	Total		**324 310**	**39 550**

[a] No expenditures in this work area are forecasted for 2018.

[b] This G-4/5 staff member is required in order to provide administrative support for activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol. The staff costs for January-December 2018 are shared with the Convention as follows: 70% of costs are covered by the Convention and 30% by the Protocol.

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Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties

Sixth meeting
Geneva, 9 November 2018
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Development of the Protocol

Progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020

Note by the Bureau

Summary

The present document outlines the progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 (Decision II/2 on the strategic plan for 2015–2020 for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1)) and suggests further actions in order to promote its implementation. The document was prepared by the Bureau under the Protocol, with the assistance of the secretariat, as requested by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its third session in 2017 (see ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para. 43).

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1813481

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Introduction

1. At its second session (Maastricht, 2014), the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol adopted the strategic plan for 2015–2020[1] and agreed that the plan would guide the implementation and further development of the Protocol up until the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

2. At its third session (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017), the Meeting of the Parties requested the secretariat to organize a survey among Parties in order to collect information on progress in implementing the strategic plan that had not been provided through the national implementation reports; mandated the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties to address in more detail the issue that Parties set priorities in different ways in terms of the implementation of the strategic plan, as identified by the Compliance Committee; mandated the Bureau and the Working Group, taking into account the outcome of the survey, to further look into the focal areas of the strategic plan to identify where further action was needed to successfully implement the targets of the strategic plan; and requested the Bureau and the Working Group to prepare a possible future strategic plan for the period of 2021–2029, taking into account the overview of progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 and the outcome of the survey and related work (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para 43).

3. In response to this request, the present note was prepared by the Bureau with the support of the secretariat. The document was prepared on the basis of the outcomes of the survey, national implementation reports submitted by Parties and the related work of the Compliance Committee, including the addendum to the report of the Meeting of the Parties on its third session entitled "Systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendations on how to address them" (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.2).

4. The note provides an overview of the current status of implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020, identifies key challenges to implementation and draws conclusions accordingly. Issues regarding a possible future strategic plan are presented in a separate note on the development of the Protocol (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/6). The following informal supporting documents will be made available on the meeting website:[2] (i) Results of the 2018 survey on progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.1); (ii) Relevant references in official documents in relation to the implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.2); and (iii) A list of possible specific actions that could further the implementation of the Protocol and strategic plan plan for 2015–2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.3).

I. Status of implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020

5. The strategic plan for 2015–2020 was conceived relatively soon after the Protocol came into force. Its vision, mission and three focal areas (implementation of the Protocol by each Party; lifting barriers to ratification and expansion beyond the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region; and development of the Protocol), together with their related indicators of progress/targets, are directly related to effective implementation of the Protocol.

[1] Decision II/2 on the strategic plan for 2015–2020 for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1).

[2] See http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47194.

6. In its overview of the progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/10, annex), the Compliance Committee discusses the status of implementation in more detail based on national implementation reports. At its third session, the Meeting of the Parties considered that a survey would provide useful additional information since the questions to which the Parties reply in their national implementation reports did not provide a full picture of progress under the strategic plan.

7. The Compliance Committee also noted in its overview that progress in implementation does not proceed in a homogeneous way among Parties. At international level, there is no coordinated implementation and monitoring process so that the Meeting of the Parties can take decisions aimed at improving implementation of the strategic plan, particularly in focal area III (Development of the Protocol).

8. Generally speaking, Parties with well-developed PRTRs have already established the necessary legal, data quality and validation structures to ensure high-quality input from point sources and have established searchable georeferenced databases. Moreover, information on individual facilities is readily available; reporting by facilities is carried out primarily through online tools; and data from diffuse sources is becoming available in some PRTRs.

9. It appears that aspects of the Protocol's implementation that entail more complex and potentially more challenging measures envisaged in the strategic plan have not been addressed by the Parties or have been addressed only to a limited extent. These include, among other things:

(a) The Protocol's design as a dynamic instrument that can be revised based on user needs and can adequately address developments in the production and use of chemical substances;

(b) The need to ensure that PRTRs are well integrated with other relevant government databases and are not limited to environmental information;

(c) The importance of improving the Protocol's use by and usefulness to stakeholders and of raising public awareness in that regard.

10. As of 16 July 2018, 31 Parties had responded to the survey: Albania, Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Brussels), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In summary, the degree of progress in implementing the strategic plan varies among the different focal areas. Progress under focal area I, implementation of the Protocol by each Party, is the easiest to analyse. Survey results show that about three quarters of Parties have implemented activities for reaching the plan's objectives. Progress under focal area II, lifting barriers to ratification and expansion beyond the ECE region, is more difficult to analyse: about a third of the Parties are engaged in related activities and three countries, none of them from beyond the ECE region, have ratified the Protocol since 2014. With regard to focal area III, development of the Protocol, the Meeting of the Parties has taken no relevant decisions. At the national level, about a third of the Parties are developing their PRTRs in ways related to the objectives of this focal area.

11. The survey results also provide information on progress on issues relevant to the mission and vision of the strategic plan. Some Parties note that they have developed roadmaps, national proposals or cross-sectoral groups on PRTRs; a few have helped to increase the impact of the Protocol by encouraging States outside the region to apply its principles and provisions; and about two thirds have initiatives or processes in place in order to keep their PRTRs under continuous review; this, in turn, may lead to the further

development of PRTRs so that they remain an adequate instrument for achievement of the Protocol's objectives. About half of the Parties are engaged in initiatives or processes that (a) encourage improvements in environmental performance by industrial operators; (b) provide information that helps to increase transparency; and (c) make available pollution-related information or knowledge, e.g. human health or risk assessments.

II. Further actions for implementation – key challenges and opportunities

12. The strategic plan is tied to full implementation of the Protocol by each Party. In addition, there are also numerous linkages between the elements of the strategic plan and other official documents developed under the Protocol.[1] Five pillars of work have been identified based on the general provisions and core elements of PRTRs as defined in articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol, respectively:

(a) Integration at the national level;

(b) Harmonization at the international level;

(c) Awareness and ease of access and use;

(d) Scope of the Protocol;

(e) Data (including its reporting, management and quality).

Successfully addressing these issues will lead to the design of databases that efficiently support Parties' efforts to follow the mission set out in the strategic plan and to reach the objectives of the Protocol.

13. While there are a number of challenges to implementation of focal areas I and II, focal area III and, in general, continuous review of principles and provisions of the Protocol at the national and international levels, is likely to present the most serious challenge in the longer term. At the national level, various approaches have been developed to address this challenge. At the international level, Parties could learn from experiences of those Parties that are reviewing their national PRTRs and discuss ways to apply the findings of these reviews in a harmonized manner; they might also address this challenge by agreeing to carry out a continuous review of the principles and provisions of the Protocol, including its scope. However, it should be borne in mind that a variety of dynamic factors will change the relevance of substances, activities and stakeholder needs over time.

14. A related challenge is the fact that since the adoption of the Protocol and the strategic plan, the Sustainable Development Goals have become an important driver of efforts to reach the Protocol's objective of reducing pollution at the national and international levels. While the strategic plan and the Protocol mention sustainable development in general terms, Member States have moved towards concrete action by developing the 2030 Agenda and its Goals and targets and the Protocol has become a potential tool for promoting their achievement.

15. In order to implement the strategic plan more effectively, a comprehensive list of challenges and related opportunities based on the aforementioned five pillars could be developed. This list could take the form of a framework for relevant activities at the

[1] See Relevant references in official documents in relation to the implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.2).

national and international levels. In that context, the following issues, among others, have arisen:

Integration at the national level

16. The integration of a PRTR system with other national databases and information-sharing platforms can: (a) increase the system's usefulness by making contextual content easily accessible to users; (b) facilitate data quality assurance; (c) reduce costs for each of the systems involved through the use of synergies; (d) facilitate reporting by private sector companies to government entities; and (d) facilitate reporting to international entities.

17. The primary challenge is the need to use the most current universal software that is appropriate for all platforms and to ensure cooperation between the relevant institutions.

18. The full potential and gains in resource efficiency of PRTRs are only available as part of an integrated system where users provide data through a single window and different ministries and government agencies can use a common database to access data relevant to their work. The cost, quality and effectiveness of such a model PRTR seem to be well worth the one-time effort to overcome cross-sectoral differences.[4] With its detailed and harmonized approach to making data available, the Protocol provides a valuable standard for use in pursuing an integrated "open government" approach.

19. The integration of PRTRs with other relevant systems is one of the Protocol's requirements and has already been addressed through other official documents.[5] Solutions may include real-time air and water quality maps and smart-phone applications, as well as private sector company or other non-PRTR datasets.[6] In order to improve implementation, particularly by Parties that install new electronic systems or renew existing ones, a detailed description of the national databases and information-sharing platforms that are most relevant and provide context for the data contained in PRTRs is required. Additionally or alternatively, detailed recommendations may be prepared based on existing examples and case studies.

Harmonization at the international level

20. Decision-making processes – which range from daily consumer choices to decisions taken at the international level – reach across national borders. Rarely will information from a single country allow consumers to make the most sustainable choices in purchasing a product and, in so doing, support companies' efforts to reduce pollutant emissions. The international comparability of pollutant-related information is therefore necessary so that people can accurately assess the impact of their choices from the point of view of sustainability. In that context, efforts by the European Union to increase traceability by implementing a circular economy are noteworthy.[7] A harmonized approach to work on the circular economy and work under the Protocol faces specific challenges, including the need for a common definition of the term "facilities".

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[4] See, for example, the PRTRs of Chile, Israel and Serbia (data sets managed by the energy, transport and health sectors).

[5] See Relevant references in official documents in relation to the implementation of the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.2).

[6] See, for example, the Green Supply Chain Map for China: http://wwwen.ipe.org.cn/MapBrand/Brand.aspx?q=6.

[7] See https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/sustainability/circular-economy_en.

21. Where data are comparable, knowledge can be exchanged and progress achieved more easily and with fewer resources spent by individual stakeholders. However, it is challenging to reach a common understanding and agreement regarding the harmonization of national databases with different priorities, degrees of scientific understanding and historic choices. Equivalencies between countries' existing terminology and new international and national initiatives must be developed based on a common set of standards that take into account existing international work under, for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and the Globally Harmonized System for Classifying Hazardous Chemicals.

Awareness, ease of access and use

22. The amount of the resources, including funding, available for PRTR-related work depends ultimately on stakeholder awareness and the ease of access and use of PRTR systems by decision-makers at all levels. Providing information on and managing "hot topics" for different stakeholder groups can be key to the success of a PRTR system.

23. It may be difficult to reach a critical mass (minimum number) of users of PRTR data who will then constitute a living forum capable of providing constructive feedback, generating new uses of data and sustaining interest in PRTR data. Once that threshold is reached, however, support for and input into PRTR-related work by the public and other stakeholders can further increase the impact of the PRTR and allow it to reach its goal of reducing pollution.

24. This will require the engagement of external partners. Today, information on pollution is available primarily through the work of journalists or scientific literature and documentation. It is important to disseminate this information to e.g. school children so that they can learn how pollution influences the quality of their life.

25. It is also challenging to ensure that PRTR data can be used and interpreted correctly, e.g. that users understand what data means and compare what is comparable. Strengthening existing promotion activities, including by training journalists and teachers and developing new ways to educate users, may also increase support for improving PRTRs.

Scope of the Protocol

26. Because the substantive scope of the Protocol should normally reflect the current users' need for information, the list of substances and activities should cover the vast majority of actual pollutant releases to environmental media in order to remain meaningful for decision-making, and provision for the interpretation of data and the inclusion of additional data (e.g. size, volume) should be made. To that end, a procedure for identifying criteria for substances and activities and setting reporting thresholds while minimizing potential duplication of work undertaken elsewhere, perhaps in the context of other international or national efforts in this field, is needed. Such an approach would increase the relevance of the Protocol and strengthen its role in the international harmonization of national approaches to reporting on pollutants.

Data

27. The backbone of PRTRs is their data, including its reporting, management and quality. Parties often face the challenge of addressing data quality issues effectively and using PRTRs to reduce facilities' overall reporting burden through improved data management. Other challenges are related to the sources of data, including measurement and calculation methodologies, and to the use of emission factors for diffuse sources.

III. Conclusions

28. While the strategic plan can be implemented at the national level, given the necessary political will and resources, Parties should also take action collectively in order to make implementation more efficient for individual Parties and should promote multilateral coordination and cooperation in order to benefit from economies of scale, making individual PRTRs more cost-efficient and increasing their impact on decision-making.

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Working Group of the Parties

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Development of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

Note by the Bureau

Summary

The present document outlines the Bureau's considerations regarding the outcomes of the review of progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 (Decision II/2 on the strategic plan for 2015–2020 for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1)), the potential need for a future strategic plan and the added value and resource implications of an evaluation of the success of the Protocol. It also includes the Bureau's proposal regarding potential activities in order to promote the development of the Protocol. The document was prepared by the Bureau under the Protocol, with the assistance of the secretariat, as requested by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its third session in 2017 (see ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para. 43).

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Introduction

1. At its third session (Budva, Montenegro, 15 September 2017), the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol requested the secretariat to organize a survey among Parties in order to collect information on progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020[1] that had not been provided through the national implementation reports; mandated the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties to address in more detail the issue that Parties set priorities in different ways in terms of the implementation of the strategic plan, as identified by the Compliance Committee; mandated the Bureau and the Working Group, taking into account the outcome of the survey, to further look into the focal areas of the strategic plan to identify where further action was needed to successfully implement the targets of the strategic plan; requested the Bureau and the Working Group to prepare a possible future strategic plan for the period of 2021–2029, taking into account the overview of progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 and the outcome of the survey and related work; and requested the Bureau to consider the added value and resource implications of a possible evaluation of the success of the Protocol and the development of relevant indicators referred to in the annex to the report of the Compliance Committee's fifth meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/C.1/2017/2, annex) and, if appropriate, present a detailed proposal, for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6, para. 43). The present document was prepared under these mandates.

I. Considerations by the Bureau

2. At its thirteenth meeting (Gothenburg, 23–24 May 2018),[2] the Bureau considered outcomes of the review of progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 with a focus on the opportunities and challenges encountered. It also examined the added value and resource implications of an evaluation of the success of the Protocol and the potential need for a future strategic plan, noting that such a plan should address recent trends in the development of pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) and take the status of implementation of the current plan into account and therefore could only be finalized once the current plan expired in 2020.

3. With regard to the possible evaluation of the success of the Protocol, the Bureau noted that there was a risk of duplication of work between the concurrent development of the Protocol (focal area III of the strategic plan) and its evaluation. It decided that it would be premature to submit to the Working Group of the Parties at its sixth meeting a proposal for evaluating the success of the Protocol and that priority should be given to work related to the development of the Protocol.

4. In light of the lessons learned from implementation of the current strategic plan, the Bureau noted that any new proposals for action by Parties should:

[1] Decision II/2 on the strategic plan for 2015–2020 for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/4/Add.1)

[2] The report of the thirteenth meeting of the Bureau is available at https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/PRTR%20Bureau/Report_PRTR-Bureau-13th_meeting.pdf.

(a) Seek to avoid duplication and minimize the potential for confusion with official documents developed under the Protocol[3] and documents on the implementation of PRTRs prepared in other relevant forums;[4]

(b) Be cost-efficient and have a strong impact on relevant decision-making processes in the medium and long terms;

(c) Ensure a coordinated, structured and binding approach to the Protocol's implementation across Parties.

5. In that regard, the Bureau concluded that neither a stand-alone evaluation of the Protocol nor the development of a possible future strategic plan would provide an effective means of overcoming the major challenges identified by Parties through their national implementation reports and survey responses. Instead, it decided to propose the voluntary and mandatory measures outlined in the following section, which could be applied simultaneously as to address the key challenges.

II. Process going forward

6. The Protocol is a unique legally binding international instrument that provides a solid framework for managing data on pollutant releases and transfers from various sources in a transparent manner. A number of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and national reporting systems already use PRTRs for reporting data in accordance with their requirements. To ensure that the Protocol continues to respond adequately to recent developments and plays an effective role in managing the data that ensures a more harmonized approach to reporting under a number of national and international instruments, including other relevant MEAs, its substantive scope and the interpretation of its provisions need to take those requirements into account. In addition, it will be important to promote links between relevant activities at the national and international levels and harmonize them with efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. There are several possible options for voluntary and mandatory activities that address these issues. With regard to voluntary activities, the Bureau agreed to give priority to an exchange of experience among Parties and stakeholders through an online platform. It also considered that amending the Protocol would be the most effective means of making its implementation mandatory and ensuring the comparability of Parties' progress in implementing it. This approach will allow relevant recent developments to be addressed in

[3] For example, the Maastricht Declaration: Transparency as a driving force for environmental democracy (ECE/MP.PP/2014/27/Add.1-ECE/MP.PRTR/2014/2/Add.1); the Budva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Our Sustainable Future (ECE/MP.PP/2017/16/Add.1-ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/2/Add.1); Your Right to Build a Sustainable Future: the Aarhus Convention, its Protocol on PRTRs and the Sustainable Development Goals (ECE/MP.PP/2017/18-ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/4); Systemic issues concerning the implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and recommendations on how to address them (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/6/Add.2); Synthesis report on the implementation of the Protocol and overview of progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/10); and Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (available in English, French, Russian and Spanish at https://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.guidancedev.html).

[4] Including, among others, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the relevant United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

a structured manner, set equal standards for implementation across Parties and facilitate the appropriate allocation of resources for implementation at the national level.

An online platform for PRTR-related actions

8. The strategic plan (para. 11) states that "Parties should play an important role in the implementation of the Protocol through the channelling of information, coordinating and/or organizing activities, motivating important target groups and monitoring implementation". To that end, Parties and stakeholders can develop jointly a list of actions aimed at supporting implementation of the Protocol in the following five pillars of work:[5]

(a) Integration at the national level;

(b) Harmonization at the international level;

(c) Awareness and ease of access and use;

(d) Scope of the Protocol;

(e) Data (including its reporting, management and quality).

9. This list may be revised periodically as needed. Parties and stakeholders can report voluntarily, e.g. through PRTR.net, on actions that they have implemented or plan to implement. The online platform would record and sort data on implementation activities using common criteria in order to provide a platform for the coordinated, efficient exchange of experience in implementing the Protocol; its development and management could also take into account experience and lessons learned from the capacity-building database[6], the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA) framework[7] and other similar initiatives.

Amendment of the Protocol

10. Article 6, paragraph 2, of the Protocol states, "Having assessed the experience gained from the development of national pollutant release and transfer registers and the implementation of the Protocol, and taking into account relevant international processes, the Meeting of the Parties shall review the reporting requirements under this Protocol and shall consider [a number of] issues in its further development". Focal area III of the strategic plan (Development of the Protocol) envisages improvements in annexes I and II to the Protocol, including the potential development of a procedure for placing the lists of substances and activities and other relevant information under constant review and for dealing with various developments (e.g. specific requirements for releases from diffuse sources and additional information on, among other things, raw materials and chemicals, production capacity and volume, and energy and water consumption).

11. In light of the foregoing, an amendment to the Protocol might address gaps in the current text of the Protocol, set priorities for future work within its framework and emphasize unique features such as its importance in regulating the collection and management of, and ensuring easy access to, information. To that end, an overview of developments under other relevant international agreements and initiatives (e.g. the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Stockholm Convention on

[5] See also para. 12 of the Progress in implementing the strategic plan for 2015–2020 (ECE/MP.PRTR/WG.1/2018/5). For a list of possible specific actions that could further the implementation of the Protocol and the strategic plan for 2015–2020 see PRTR/WG.1/2018/Inf.3.

[6] https://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/RLsearch.asp.

[7] See https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environment-for-europe/initiatives/baca.html.

Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), relevant developments in Parties and other countries, work related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and initiatives in connection with the circular economy might be prepared. It will be also important to update the Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol in due course in order to clarify or supplement the Protocol's provisions where needed.

12. Therefore, pursuant to the article 6 para. 2, of the Protocol, the strategic plan for 2015–2020 and relevant developments at the national and international levels, the Bureau decided to ask the Working Group of the Parties at its sixth meeting to:

(a) Request the Bureau, with the support of the Compliance Committee, to review annexes I and II to the Protocol and prepare a draft proposal for amendments to the annexes, taking into consideration other relevant official documents developed under the auspices of the Protocol (see para 4 (a) above) and recent developments in relevant international processes, with a view to open-ended consultations among Parties and stakeholders and possible adoption by the Meeting of the Parties in 2021;

(b) Recommend that at its fourth session in 2021, the Meeting of the Parties establish a dedicated task force under the auspices of the Working Group of the Parties to consider the possible amendment of other provisions of the Protocol;

(c) Request the Bureau, with the support of the Compliance Committee, to begin preparatory work by identifying gaps and examples of imprecise wording in the other provisions of the Protocol, prior to the fourth session, as a basis for possible amendment of the Protocol and/or revision of the Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol.

13. The procedures for amending annexes are set out in article 20 of the Protocol and are different from those that apply to the amendment of its other provisions.